

The busy lives of teens

Katherine Marshall

High school students are future members of the core labour force. Many of them understand that to achieve success they must do well in school and pursue some form of postsecondary education.¹ Apart from schooling, teenagers can increase their human capital in other ways, such as working at a paid job, participating in volunteer activities, and even doing household chores, which can provide many useful basic skills. Early training and skills development, in and out of school, can open up opportunities and choices in terms of attending university or finding employment. It is well accepted that investment in personal human capital increases the chances of finding meaningful, productive and higher-earning employment (Keeley 2007).

Time invested in these various skill-enhancing activities can be beneficial in other ways as well. For example, youth earnings can provide some financial aid toward a postsecondary education, and participation in housework can help alleviate some of the household responsibilities of busy parents. On the other hand, an inordinate amount of time spent on unpaid and paid work activities could lead to unhealthy levels of stress and reduce well-being, negatively affecting education outcomes.

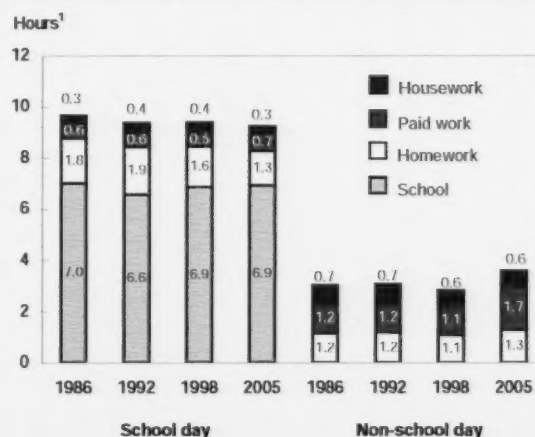
This article examines trends in the average number of daily hours teenagers spend on education-related activities, paid work and housework. It also examines in detail time differences by sex and other socio-economic characteristics of teens in 2005, as well as looking at indicators of stress related to paid and unpaid workloads. The analysis is based on time-use data that allow a detailed examination of one 24-hour day (See *Data sources and definitions*). Some information is also provided on annual volunteer work (see *Volunteering*). Although the intrinsic value of the unpaid and paid work activities surveyed cannot be determined

(for example, the quality of the schooling or part-time work experience), time spent on these activities can be viewed as a positive initiative in skill development.

Most teens put in long days

Over the past 20 years, a typical school day for a teenager aged 15 to 19 has averaged about 7 hours of school attendance, and another 2.5 hours of homework, paid work and housework (Chart A). Students also do about 3 hours of homework, paid work and housework per day on weekends and other non-school days. Mainly because of the increase in paid work since 1998, total productive work increased to 3.5 hours on weekends in 2005. Despite the stereotypical image of lounging, sleeping, nonchalant teenagers, many of them carry a heavy load. In fact, compared with nine other OECD countries with time-use sur-

Chart A Teenagers do much more than go to school



1 Average hours spent per day for the population aged 15 to 19. Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey

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veys, Canadian teens ranked first in terms of average hours spent on unpaid and paid labour during the school week (Table 1). Furthermore, averaged over the week (school and non-school days), teens did an average of 7.1 hours of unpaid and paid labour per day in 2005—virtually the same as the 7.2 hours adult Canadians aged 20 to 64 spent on the same activities. Only the distribution was different for adults, with an average of 8.3 hours of unpaid and paid work being done on weekdays, and 4.5 hours on weekends.

Generally, girls spend more time than boys on unpaid and paid work, particularly on weekends. For example, in 2005, boys put in an average of 9.1 hours on school days and 3.1 hours on weekends, while girls did 9.3 hours and 4.2 hours respectively. Averaged over the whole week, teenage girls did significantly more unpaid and paid work per day than boys—7.5 versus 6.7 hours.

Homework takes time

The demands of high school curricula and university entrance requirements render homework essential for most students. Doing homework on a daily basis remained relatively stable over the four years examined, with roughly 70% of teenagers doing some each day on school days and 40% doing some on weekends. After school attendance, homework is the second most time-consuming, work-related activity for teens. Time spent on it has edged down on school days (1.3 hours in 2005) and up on non-school days (also to 1.3 hours), totalling about 9.2 hours per week. But as in other years, girls did more—10.3 hours compared with 8.1 hours for boys (Chart B). Interestingly, in almost all other industrialized countries, girls spend more time than boys doing homework (Zuzanek and Mannell 2005, 388).

Paid work increasing among teen girls

The average time spent working at a paid job in 2005 reached 0.7 hours on school days and 1.7 hours on non-school days. This represents about 7.6 hours per week, an increase of two hours from the previous three periods. The daily paid-work participation rate also edged up slightly, mainly because of higher weekend rates—28% reported working on a non-school day in 2005, compared with 20% in 1986. In 2005, girls for the first time had a higher daily employment rate than boys (23% versus 19%). These employment trends are similar to those found with the Labour Force Survey (LFS), which asks all respondents whether they did any

Table 1 Time spent on unpaid and paid work on school days for those aged 15 to 19

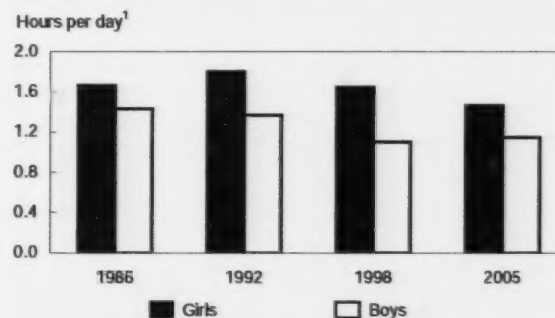
	Total time	School related	Paid work	Domestic work ¹
	Hours:minutes			
Canada (1998)	9:45	8:31	:32	:43
Belgium (1999)	9:43	8:46	:13	:44
United States (2003)	9:10	7:53	:41	:36
Australia (1997)	9:08	8:01	:23	:44
Netherlands (2000)	8:55	7:34	:40	:41
United Kingdom (2000)	8:50	7:46	:22	:42
France (1998)	8:42	8:01	:09	:32
Norway (2000)	8:37	7:19	:17	1:01
Germany (2001/02)	8:29	7:23	:08	:58
Finland (1999/00)	8:16	7:11	:08	:57

¹ Includes family care.

Source: Time use data collected by national statistical agencies (Zuzanek 2005).

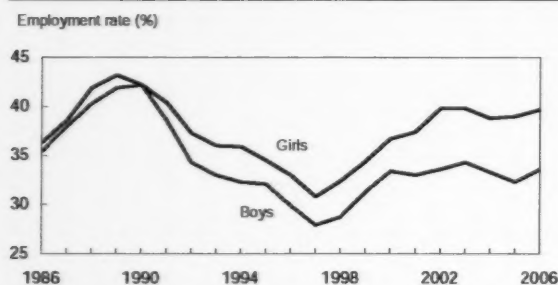
work for pay during the reference week.² In 2006, 40% of girls and 34% of boys aged 15 to 19 who were attending school reported having a job sometime during the LFS reference week, with usual weekly hours of 13.6 and 14.5 respectively (Chart C). Both surveys show teenage girls now surpassing boys in terms of employment rates and a convergence of average hours worked.³ These trends suggest that the difference

Chart B Total homework hours relatively stable, but boys still lag behind girls

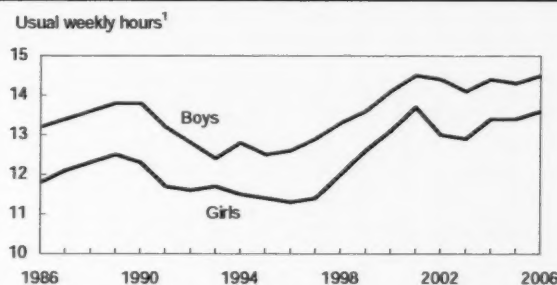


¹ Averaged over seven days for the population aged 15 to 19. Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey

Chart C Since the 1990s, school-attending teen girls have been more likely to be employed than boys...



...but boys with jobs work on average one hour more per week than girls



1 For those employed.

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

between women's and men's labour market activity may also continue to narrow as this younger generation enters the labour force on a permanent basis.

As with their parents, less housework but more equality

Overall, daily housework has trended downward. Daily participation in housework was 39% in 2005 compared with 43% in 1986, while the average time spent doing it dropped from 28 minutes to 23 (Table 2).⁴ Although parents may not think that 23 minutes (averaged over 7 days) is much of a contribution relative to the 118 minutes they put in, it still represents 16% of total housework time.

Overall, adults have increased their daily participation in housework, but reduced the time spent on it. A significant decrease in the daily participation rate and in time spent by women has been more than offset by an increase in both for men (Marshall 2006). Interestingly, this convergence is being mirrored in

Table 2 Participation rate and average time spent on household chores, population aged 15 to 19

	All house- work	Core housework					Non-core house- work ¹
		Total	Meal prepa- ration	Meal clean- up	Indoor cleaning	Laun- dry	
Daily participation rate (%)							
1986							
Both sexes	43	39	23	19	13	F	8 ^E
Girls	53	52	30	27	18 ^E	F	F
Boys	33*	28*	17* ^E	12* ^E	9* ^E	F	11 ^E
2005							
Both sexes	39	35	26	3	9	F	9
Girls	43	39	27	4 ^E	13	F	8 ^E
Boys	36	30	26	F	F	F	11 ^E
Average minutes per day (population) ²							
1986							
Both sexes	28	21	9	5	7 ^E	F	7 ^E
Girls	34	30	13	8	9 ^E	F	F
Boys	24 ^E	13* ^E	5* ^E	2* ^E	F	F	F
2005							
Both sexes	23	17	7	1 ^E	8 ^E	F	7 ^E
Girls	27	22	8 ^E	1 ^E	12 ^E	F	F
Boys	20	11* ^E	6	F	F	F	9 ^E

1 Includes such items as outdoor cleaning, mending or sewing, interior or exterior maintenance or repairs, gardening, pet and plant care, or household paperwork.

2 Time averaged over 7 days; numbers may not add due to rounding.

* Statistically significant difference with girls at the <.05 level.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey

Data sources and definitions

Since 1985, the **General Social Survey (GSS)** has annually interviewed Canadians aged 15 and over living in the 10 provinces on a wide range of social trends and social policy issues. Using a 24-hour diary instrument, the GSS has collected detailed information on time use in four different years with varying sample sizes—1986 (16,400), 1992 (9,800), 1998 (10,700) and 2005 (19,600). Individual activities are recorded sequentially for a 24-hour **diary day**. All activities are subsequently coded to a standard international classification. Each day of the week is sampled. Therefore, calculations are usually averaged over a 7-day period (see below). While the 1986 survey collected data during the months of November and December only, all remaining cycles covered a 12-month period.

Each month, the **Labour Force Survey (LFS)** collects information on labour market activity, covering a one-week reference period, from all persons 15 and older. The survey includes questions about the usual and actual weekly hours at main and secondary jobs. The **LFS employment rate** for a particular group (for example, girls aged 15 to 19) is the employed labour force in that group expressed as a percentage of their population. For comparison purposes, the annual LFS data used in this paper were customized to align with the target population (see below). (Student status in the LFS is based on school attendance during the survey reference week).

Target population: all teenagers aged 15 to 19 who were interviewed in September through June (the traditional school year). They also had to be single and never married, living at home with at least one parent, and report their main activity as attending school. Around 80% of teenagers living at home reported going to school as their main activity. Some comparisons are made with the adult population aged 20 to 64. Those over 64 are more likely to be retired and have quite different unpaid and paid work activity patterns.

School attendance refers to the total time spent in full-time or part-time classes, special lectures, meals at school, breaks between classes, and travel to and from school. Based on an international standard, a day was designated a **school day** if 60 minutes or more were spent attending school (Zuzanek and Mannell 2005).

Homework includes all study time related to course work.

Paid work includes time spent on all activities related to a job or business. The GSS data also include time spent travelling to and from the workplace, as well as unpaid work in a family, business or farm.

Core housework covers meal preparation, meal clean-up (for example, doing the dishes or clearing the table), indoor cleaning (for example, dusting or vacuuming), and laundry. Core activities are those that are most likely done on a daily basis and demand, on average, the most time. **Non-core housework** includes such items as outdoor cleaning, mending or sewing, interior or exterior maintenance and repair, gardening, pet and plant care, household paperwork, and unpacking groceries. **Total housework** comprises core and non-core activities.

A respondent is deemed to have **immigrant parents** if both their mother and father were born outside Canada. **Canadian-born parent(s)** means that at least one parent was born in Canada.

All the teenagers in this study lived in a **two-parent intact family** (never-divorced parents), a **two-parent blended family** (one parent and one step-parent), or a **one-parent family** (either mother or father).

Parental level of education is based on the highest level achieved. The derived categories are both parents having a university degree, both having a high school diploma or less, and a 'mix' of levels. A mix means that both parents could have a postsecondary certificate or diploma, or a combination of any of the levels noted here.

An **urban** area has a minimum population of 1,000 and a population density of at least 400 persons per square kilometre. **Rural** areas comprise all territory not deemed urban.

Positive well-being is being 'very happy' and/or feeling 'very satisfied' with 'life as a whole right now' (that is, reporting a 9 or 10 on a scale of 1 to 10).

Activity participation rate (time use) indicates the proportion of the population (or sub-population) that reported spending some time on a particular activity on diary day. The participation rate is a daily rate, and unless otherwise specified is an average over a seven-day week (average of the daily rates of Sunday through Saturday diary days).

Average time spent on specific activities (time use) of the population or sub-population refers to the total time all respondents reported spending on a given activity divided by the population and averaged over a seven-day week. The average time spent on activities for participants refers to the average time spent of only those who participated in that activity on diary day, but again over seven days.

the younger generation. Daily participation in housework in 1986 was significantly higher for girls than for boys (53% versus 33%), but by 2005 the rates had converged to 43% and 36% respectively. Although not significant in either year, the gap in time spent also narrowed over the period. And, even though the boundaries between traditional male and female housework

tasks are still evident, some indication of a breakdown can be seen. For example, in 1986, on any given day, 30% of girls were likely to help with meal preparation at home, compared with only 17% of boys. By 2005, about one-quarter of both were doing some work in the kitchen each day.

Volunteering

The incidence of daily participation in volunteer work is too small for a detailed analysis. However, questions were also asked about volunteering in the past year. In 2005, more than half (54%) of all school-attending teenagers aged 15 to 19 did some unpaid volunteer work, significantly higher than the adult (20 to 64) rate (35%). Some 60% of both teen and adult volunteers put in at least five or more hours per month. These findings mirror those in national volunteer surveys (Hall et al. 2006).

Some provinces have begun to legislate mandatory community service as a requirement for high school graduation. Total requirements range from 40 hours in Ontario to 25 hours in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut (Volunteer Canada 2006). This is probably behind Ontario's significantly higher annual volunteer rate for teenagers (66%).

Volunteered¹ sometime in 2005

	Teens	Adults
	%	
Total	54	35
Boys/men (ref)	51	32
Girls/women	58	38*
British Columbia (ref)	48	37
Alberta	54	42*
Manitoba and Saskatchewan	47	43*
Ontario	66*	36
Quebec	40	26*
Nova Scotia	52	41
Other Atlantic	51	37

1 Did unpaid volunteer work for any organization.

* Significant difference with reference (ref) group at the <.05 level.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey

The next section focuses on 2005 data and examines the key factors associated with teenagers' daily participation in and time spent on the three key productive non-school activities: homework, paid work and housework. Included are results of Tobit regression models for each activity (see *Regression*).

Family characteristics and paid work linked to homework

Skills and knowledge acquisition from schooling is a teen's most important asset for ensuring a positive socio-economic outcome later in life. Strong cognitive skills enable children to do well in school and perform better on standardized tests, thus increasing the likelihood of attaining higher levels of education. Reading abilities and marks are most important and account for 34% of the gap in university attendance between

lower- and higher-income families (Frenette 2007). The second most important influence is parental education (30%), followed by parental expectations (12%) and financial constraints (12%). But what determines the gap in marks? Commitment to homework, as examined here may shed some light on this issue, since logically, good study habits improve academic performance (Bianchi and Robinson 1997). Time spent on homework can also be an indicator not only of school effort, but also of dedication and a desire to do well.

On any given day, roughly 6 in 10 teenagers aged 15 to 19 did an average of 2 hours and 17 minutes of homework (Table 3). Averaged over the population, the time spent on homework was 1 hour and 19 minutes. Mainly because of the difference in participation rate (68% versus 39%), homework effort was significantly higher on school days (26 additional minutes). So in addition to seven hours of classes and related activities, most teens spent just under two hours doing homework on school days.⁵ When controlling for other characteristics, older teens (18 and 19) also spent significantly more time per day on homework than their younger counterparts (15 to 17).

Participation in and time spent on homework was strongly influenced by both sex and cultural background. While over 7 in 10 boys with immigrant parents (both parents born outside Canada) did homework daily, and for an average of 2 hours and 37 minutes, only half of boys with Canadian-born parent(s) did so, and for just under 2 hours. The net

Regression

Tobit regression analysis is well suited to time-use data, which has a large number of non-participants in certain activities on any given day. The technique assesses all participants and non-participants by simultaneously considering both the likelihood of daily participation and the average duration of time spent. The model first treats the data as binary (0 or 1) based on whether the respondent participated in the activity on diary day (for example, homework) and then fits the positive values (minutes spent doing it) linearly. The marginal effect is another way to interpret the model coefficients and represents the impact of time spent at the mean value of each variable. The calculation is based on the probability of participating in an activity multiplied by the mean value of time spent. The analysis was run with Stata 9, which allows for the application of bootstrap weights. For other examples of Tobit analysis and time-use data, see Flood and Grasjo 1998 and Bianchi and Robinson 1997.

Table 3 Homework participation and time spent

	Population	Participation rate	Time per day (participants)	Time per day (population)	Tobit estimates ¹ predicting minutes per day
	'000	%	Hours:minutes		
Total	1,228	57	2:17	1:19	...
Age					
15 to 17	676	57	1:58	1:07	-22**
18 to 19	552	58	2:41	1:33	ref
Boys	593	54	2:09	1:09	...
Girls	635	61	2:24	1:28	...
Immigrant parents					
Boy	132	71	2:37	1:52	20
Girl	128	74	1:56	1:25	4
Canadian-born parent(s)					
Boy	453	50	1:57	:58	-21**
Girl	494	58	2:35	1:30	ref
Two parents (intact family)	862	63	2:22	1:29	ref
Two parents (blended family)	132	49	2:00	:58	-20
One parent	235	43	2:04	:53	-31***
Education level of parents					
Both university	213	69	2:48	1:57	34**
Mixed	358	61	2:10	1:19	10
Both high school or less	384	51	2:15	1:09	ref
School day	773	68	1:57	1:20	26***
Non-school day	456	39	3:16	1:17	ref
Urban	979	59	2:21	1:23	13
Rural	250	51	1:58	1:01	ref
Not employed	770	57	2:21	1:20	ref
Usual weekly job hours					
1-9	106	59	2:50	1:40	19
10-19	173	70	2:17	1:35	12
20+	172	46	1:36	:45	-32 **

1 This is the marginal effect each variable has on the time spent doing daily homework.

* Regression results statistically significant at the <.10 level; ** <.05 level, *** <.01 level from the reference (ref) group.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005

result is an overall reduced effort on homework by boys compared with girls. Controlling for other factors shows that among teens with Canadian-born parent(s), boys did significantly less homework (21 minutes per day) than girls. However, no significant difference was found for boys or girls with immigrant parents.

Being in a two-parent intact family significantly increases both the chances of doing homework and of doing more of it. Over 6 in 10 teens from such families did homework on a daily basis, compared with less than half of those in two-parent blended and lone-parent families. Controlling for other factors shows that teens in one-parent families averaged 31 minutes less

per day on homework than those in two-parent intact families. Children's activity patterns are different in one- and two-parent households. With only one adult to manage the household, less time is available to monitor activities and supervise homework (Bianchi and Robinson 1997, 335).

It appears that highly educated parents either encourage or enforce the issue of homework for their children more than parents with lower education levels. Seven in 10 teens whose parents both had university education did homework on a daily basis and spent close to three hours at it—significantly more than those whose parents had less education.⁶

Compared with students currently not employed, only those in jobs with long weekly hours (20 or more) did significantly less homework (32 minutes less per day). An ongoing debate rages about the pros and cons of having a job through high school. Although studies have found moderate employment hours to be linked with positive future earnings, occupational status and academic performance, and most show long hours (20 or more per week) to be detrimental to school performance (Ruhm 1997; Stinebrickner and Stinebrickner 2003; Zuzanek and Mannell 2005; Parent 2006).

Work for pay more common on weekends and among older teens

By the end of high school, most teenagers will have done some work for pay. Many start with informal work such as babysitting or yard work, and then move to more formal organizational settings, which offer more complex work (Mortimer et al. 1994).

Table 4 Paid work participation and time spent

	Population	Participation rate	Time per day (participants)	Time per day (population)	Tobit estimates ¹ predicting minutes per day
	'000	%	Hours:minutes		
Total	1,228	21	5:04	1:05	...
Age					
15 to 17	676	14	4:33	:39	-47***
18 to 19	552	30	5:22	1:36	ref
Boys	593	19	5:03	:59	-16
Girls	635	23	5:04	1:10	ref
Immigrant parents					
Boy	132	F	F	F	...
Girl	128	F	F	F	...
Canadian-born parent(s)					
Boy	453	21	4:59	1:01 ^E	...
Girl	494	25	5:05	1:18	...
Two parents (intact family)	862	22	5:11	1:08	ref
Two parents (blended family)	132	24 ^E	4:08 ^E	:59	7
One parent	235	18 ^E	5:15	:56 ^E	-9
Education level of parents					
Both university	213	16 ^E	3:45	:36 ^E	ref
Mixed	358	27	4:24	1:10	33*
Both high school or less	384	22	6:21	1:23	33
School day	773	17	4:00	:42	-37***
Non-school day	456	28	6:12	1:43	ref
Urban	979	21	5:03	1:05	7
Rural	250	21 ^E	5:06	1:04 ^E	ref

¹ This is the marginal effect each variable has on the time spent doing daily paid work.

* Regression results statistically significant at the <.10 level; ** <.05 level, *** <.01 level from the reference (ref) group.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005

In 2005, one in five teenagers aged 15 to 19 worked at a paid job for five hours on diary day (Table 4). As expected, younger teens (15 to 17) were significantly less likely to report daily employment activity (14%) than those aged 18 or 19 (30%) and likely to spend less time at it (47 minutes less per day).⁷ Teenagers did significantly more paid work on the days they did not attend school, with 28% working just over six hours. Teens with par-

ents with lower levels of education did 33 more minutes per day of paid work than those with university-educated parents.

Housework is gender-neutral among teens with Canadian-born parents

Housework performed by children has been written about in terms of sex-role socialization—its role in teaching responsibility and life

skills—and more lightly, in terms of the never-ending battle. The introduction of compulsory schooling in the late 1800s significantly reduced the amount of children's domestic labour. The more recent reduction in housework participation by teens may be partly due to our evolving service-oriented economy and changing attitudes toward housework standards and priorities (Marshall 2006). Still, 39% of teens put in about an hour of housework daily (Table 5). Because of reduced opportunity and time, students do significantly less housework on school days than on weekends and other non-school days (9 minutes less per day). While age does not make a difference, teenagers in urban settings participated less in housework than their rural counterparts and for fewer hours. Since housework includes outdoor chores, work on farms may be part of the reason behind this difference.

Cultural background and family formation also play a role. After controlling for other factors, no significant difference was seen between girls and boys of Canadian-born parents in the effort on housework. Both had a daily participation rate of 40% and spent about one hour at it. However, compared with girls of Canadian-born parents, girls of immigrant parents did significantly more housework (17 minutes per day), and boys of immigrant parents did significantly less (11 minutes).

Finally, teenagers in two-parent blended families were much more likely to help with housework than teens in other family types. Both girls and boys with step-parents helped out more—72% of girls did housework daily for 50 minutes, 43% of boys for 66 minutes.

Table 5 Housework participation and time spent

	Population	Participation rate	Time per day (participants)	Time per day (population)	Tobit estimates ¹ predicting minutes per day
	'000	%	Hours:minutes		
Total	1,228	39	:59	:23	...
Age					
15 to 17	676	39	:51	:20	-2
18 to 19	552	40	1:08	:27	ref
Boys	593	36	:55	:20	...
Girls	635	43	1:02	:27	...
Immigrant parents					
Boy	132	24 ^E	F	F	-11*
Girl	128	48	1:32 ^E	:44 ^E	17*
Canadian-born parent(s)					
Boy	453	40	:58	:23 ^E	0
Girl	494	40	:52	:21	ref
Two parents (intact family)	862	38	1:01	:23	ref
Two parents (blended family)	132	56	:57 ^E	:32 ^E	15**
One parent	235	36	:53	:19	-1
Education level of parents					
Both university	213	38	:51 ^E	:19 ^E	ref
Mixed	358	41	:54	:22 ^E	6
Both high school or less	384	40	1:06 ^E	:26 ^E	5
School day	773	37	:44	:16	-9**
Non-school day	456	43	1:21	:35	ref
Urban	979	38	:52	:20	-11*
Rural	250	46	1:21	:37 ^E	ref

¹ This is the marginal effect each variable has on the time spent doing daily housework.

* Regression results statistically significant at the <.10 level; ** <.05 level, *** <.01 level from the reference (ref) group.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005

Stress higher for girls, older teens and those who spend long hours at homework and paid work

Like adults, teenagers can feel somewhat burdened with their day-to-day unpaid and paid work responsibilities. Approximately 1 in 10 regularly felt very stressed with not having enough time in the day (Table 6). A similar proportion were quite or extremely stressed because of school, while 16%

considered themselves workaholics. Almost 4 in 10 reported being under constant pressure to accomplish more than they could handle, and 6 in 10 tended to cut back on sleep when they needed more time.⁸ One-quarter of teens reported not having any of these five stress indicators related to time and productive work, 36% mentioned one, 23% two, and 16% three or more—an average of 1.4 per teenager.

Stress-level rates have changed very little over time. Another constant has been that for each question, girls tend to report a higher level of stress than boys. In 2005, girls had significantly more stress indicators than boys (Table 6). Interestingly, adult women have also consistently reported higher work-family stress than men (Zukewich 2003; Marshall 2006). For example, in terms of feeling constant pressure to accomplish more than is manageable, women in each age group reported higher rates than men, and teenage girls aged 18 to 19 had the highest rate overall (Chart D).

Older teens also reported significantly more stress indicators than younger teens. This is understandable since the last year of high school (or first year of postsecondary schooling) is often more difficult than the first years of high school, and the need for good marks is crucial. Furthermore, 18 and 19 year-olds are on the cusp on adulthood, which brings increased independence and personal and financial responsibility. Two other factors that significantly increase stress in a teen's life included spending more than 2.5 hours per day on homework, and having 20 hours or more of paid work per week.

Girls report more stress, but self-rating of well-being equal to boys

Although most teens answered yes to at least one indicator, some stress may not necessarily be detrimental.⁹ In fact, moderate levels of stress have been positively linked with performance, energy and health. On the other hand, too much long-term stress can have negative mental and physical health effects (Farmer and Ferraro 1997; Wein 2000).

Table 6 Indicators of personal stress related to time and unpaid and paid work

	Very stressed for lack of time	Very stressed from school	Is a workaholic	Constant pressure to do more than can handle	Cut back on sleep to gain more time	Stress indicators
			%			Number
Total	11	12	16	39	64	1.4
Girls	14	15	17	46	68	1.6*
Boys (ref)	8 ^E	9	15	32	60	1.3
Age						
15 to 17 (ref)	7 ^E	9 ^E	14	36	58	1.2
18 to 19	16	17	18	44	71	1.7*
Homework on diary day¹						
None (ref)	7 ^E	7 ^E	12 ^E	40	63	1.3
Less than 1.5 hours	9 ^E	8 ^E	19 ^E	34	63	1.3
1.5 to 2.5 hours	12 ^E	15 ^E	19 ^E	36	65	1.5
Over 2.5 hours	24 ^E	27 ^E	17 ^E	48	66	1.8*
Diary day a school day (ref)						
Non-school day	8 ^E	11	18	38	63	1.4
	16 ^E	15 ^E	12 ^E	41	66	1.5
Not employed						
Usual weekly hours	10 ^E	11	14	38	60	1.4
1 to 9 (ref)	F	F	F	40 ^E	58	1.2
10 to 19 hours	F	F	16 ^E	38	77	1.6
20 hours or more	15 ^E	18 ^E	31 ^E	42	71	1.8*

1 The reference day of the interview (see *Data sources and definitions*).

* Statistically significant difference (<.05 level) from reference (ref) group.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005

Roughly two-thirds of all girls and boys in 2005 reported being very happy and/or very satisfied with life overall¹⁰ (Table 7). However, the higher the level of personal stress (defined as the total number of indicators), the lower the likelihood of having very high levels of happiness and/or satisfaction. Of those with three or more stress indicators, only 45% were very happy and/or very satisfied with life, compared with a 72% positive rating among teens with no stress indicators.

Higher levels of stress (three or more indicators) reduced the level of happiness and satisfaction for both girls and boys to 40% and 52% respectively (a significant drop for girls). When little or no stress was indicated, about 80% of girls

Table 7 Positive well-being by number of stress indicators related to time and unpaid and paid work

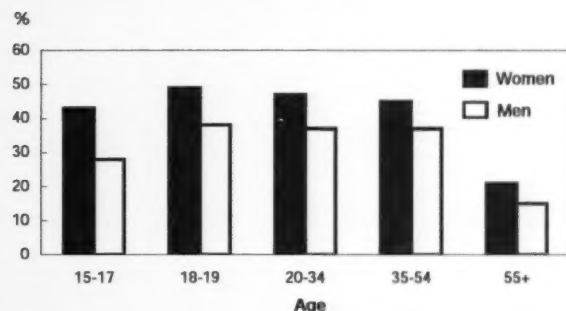
	Total	None	One	Two	Three or more
Currently feels very happy and/or very satisfied with life as a whole			%		
Both sexes	64	72	73	57*	45*
Girls	65	78	80	55*	40 ^E
Boys	63	68	66	60	52 ^E

* Statistically significant difference at the <.05 level from those with no stress indicators.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005

reported being very happy and/or very satisfied, compared with only about two-thirds of boys. Therefore, although girls reported more stress, which seems to suppress

feelings of well-being, their relatively high well-being when they had little or no stress equalized their overall rating of well-being to that of boys.¹¹

Chart D Almost half of older teenage girls feel constant pressure to accomplish more than they can handle



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2005

Conclusion

The vast majority of 15 to 19 year-olds living at home with their parents attend school. In 2005, these teenagers did an average of 9.2 hours of school work, homework, paid work and housework on school days and 3.5 hours on weekends. This equates to a 50-hour workweek, the same time adults aged 20 to 64 spend on these activities. The time teens spend is arguably skill-enhancing and a positive investment in their long-term personal and economic well-being.

After school attendance, homework was the most time-consuming unpaid activity for teens, with 60% doing an average of 2 hours and 20 minutes every day. Family environment is a strong predictor of this activity. Teens were significantly more likely to do homework and more of it if both parents had a university education, if they lived in a two-parent intact family, and if their parents were foreign-born. Interestingly, boys with Canadian-born parents did significantly less homework than girls in similar families, and less than either girls or boys with immigrant parents. As well, teens with demanding paid jobs (20 hours or more per week) did significantly less homework than those not employed.

Age and type of day (school versus non-school) were strongly significant predictors of teens being involved in daily paid work. And indeed, paid work was the only productive activity that witnessed an increase over time. Although some studies have shown part-time

student employment to be positively linked with personal responsibility, dependability and future productivity, an excess can interfere with school. Furthermore, this study shows that teenagers with long paid workweeks reported higher levels of personal stress.

Almost 4 in 10 teens did some housework daily, averaging about one hour. Although differences have narrowed over the past 20 years, in 2005, girls with immigrant parents did significantly more housework than boys in such families. Time spent on housework was also higher in rural areas and in two-parent blended families.

In sum, most teens have relatively high workloads, and not surprisingly, this comes with some feelings of stress. For example, 16% considered themselves workaholics, 39% felt under constant pressure to accomplish more than they could handle, and most (64%) cut back on sleep to get things done. Although self-ratings of well-being decreased as stress went up, most teens responded positively to questions about happiness and life satisfaction. Education and skill development are important activities for teenagers, but balance in life is also essential for ensuring a positive sense of well-being.

Perspectives

Notes

- 1 The vast majority of students graduate from high school and continue with some form of postsecondary education. According to the 1995 School Leavers Follow-up Survey, 80% of high school graduates did further schooling towards a certificate, diploma or university degree (Frank 1997).
- 2 Since the reference period in the LFS is one week as opposed to the one day in time-use surveys, the LFS employment rate will be higher since the chances of reporting some work hours are greater.
- 3 Averaged over the population (including those not employed), in 2005, girls worked longer weekly hours in both the GSS and the LFS. However, among those employed, the GSS shows both sexes working the same average number of hours per week while the LFS shows boys working one hour more.
- 4 These differences are not statistically significant.
- 5 Homework can be completed any time during a school day—for example, during the lunch hour.
- 6 Family income, although often correlated with level of education, would have been included separately as well; however, the majority of teen respondents were not able to answer the income question.

7 Half of teens aged 18 to 19 and one-quarter of those aged 15 to 17 reported having a job at some time in the past week. Among those with jobs, 45% of the older group and 27% of the younger group usually worked 20 hours or more per week.

8 Among adults aged 20 to 64, 24% reported being very stressed from lack of time and 12% very stressed from work, 28% considered themselves workaholics, 39% felt under constant pressure to do more than was manageable, and 52% cut back on sleep to gain more time. The average number of stress indicators was 1.5 for men and 1.6 for women, a statistically insignificant difference.

9 Among girls, 20% reported no stress indicators, 36% had one, 25% had two, and 19% had three or more. The equivalent distribution for boys was 29%, 36%, 21% and 14%.

10 More broadly, 97% of teenagers were very or somewhat happy, and 95% had a life satisfaction rating of at least 6 or higher out of 10. Although not discussed, 1986 data show similar levels.

11 Although the existence of time and work-related stress appears to affect girls and boys differently in terms of their sense of well-being, it must be kept in mind that stress in an adolescent's life comes from many different sources.

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